

## **Golden Times**

Your Region's retirement magazine

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Genesee man makes miniature working engines

Don Herman enjoys craft he started as a hobby in the 1960s

By Lorraine Nelson  
of Target Publications

GENESEE – Long before he started, Don Hermann was thinking about the miniature tractor he would like to make someday.

"Every time I get near a piece of wood, it splits.  
Metal is a little more forgiving."

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He wanted the engine compartment to be open, so the gears and the crank-shaft were visible. He saw a picture of a fully restored 1911-1914 International Harvester on the cover of Antique Power magazine. It was 25 horse-power and ran on kerosene. Hermann telephoned the owner, who lived in Pennsylvania. "He told me I couldn't make one," Hermann recalled. That was enough of a challenge to make sure he would give it a try.

Hermann had already made several working miniature engines. His interest in the hobby started in the 1960s when he added a small lathe to the collection of tools in his farm shop. He decided he wanted to do more with the lathe than just repair equipment, so he bought a casting kit for a miniature four-cylinder, gas powered engine. That was the first one he made.

Throughout his career as a farmer, Hermann built several other engines, some from casting kits and others from scratch. Now

age 74 and retired, he continues to pursue the hobby in his farm shop east of Genesee where, in addition to the standard farm shop tools, he has a much larger lathe and a milling machine.

Hermann learned from the man in Pennsylvania there was another fully restored 1911-1914 International Harvester tractor at Crosby, N.D. He and his wife, Donna, made three trips there to see it, measure it and take pictures. He believes the tractor at Crosby and the one in Pennsylvania may be the only two of that kind in the country. He figures he researched the tractor for about a year, from 1994 to 1995, before he started to build it.

Hermann located and purchased some engine castings for the tractor from a man in South Carolina, but he had to construct the rest from scratch. "I laid awake nights trying to figure out how to make it work," he said. He is proud to say of all the parts he had to make himself, he never had to do one over. He didn't dare make the wooden parts, however. Those were done by his son-in-law, Larry Schwartz of Lewiston. "Every time I get near a piece of wood, it splits," Hermann said. "Metal is a little more forgiving."

He built the tractor one-eighth of its original size. The rear-wheel diameter is 8.75 inches and the tractor is 12.375 inches wide. It runs mostly on camp stove gas, but can also operate on three, 9-volt batteries. He finished it in 1999 and the next year he took it to the Pacific Rim International Medal Engineering Exhibition in Eugene, Ore. He returned with a first-place ribbon in the category for farm and industrial internal combustion engines.

"There are a lot of people doing this," Hermann said. "I didn't realize it until I got into it." He has met a couple of other men closer to home who share his hobby, which makes it more enjoyable. He is currently working on a vacuum engine. Instead of working on it six to eight hours a day, however, like he did when he was building the tractor, he puts in half days.

Hermann has quite a collection of engines he's built. One of his heat-transfer engines is displayed on a table inside the front door of

his home. The heat from a tiny, 7-watt bulb lifts the piston, which turns a metal wheel. His wife listened while he explained it to a visitor, and then she said jokingly, "Everyone should have one of these in their home, don't you think?" "There really isn't any use for any of these," Hermann said later, while looking at the display of engines in his shop. "They're just something to play with."

These are miniature engines built by Don Hermann of rural Genesee. The engine pictured at top is the newest and is a vacuum engine, to the right is a two-cylinder gas engine and at the bottom is an alcohol or propane fueled heat-transfer engine.



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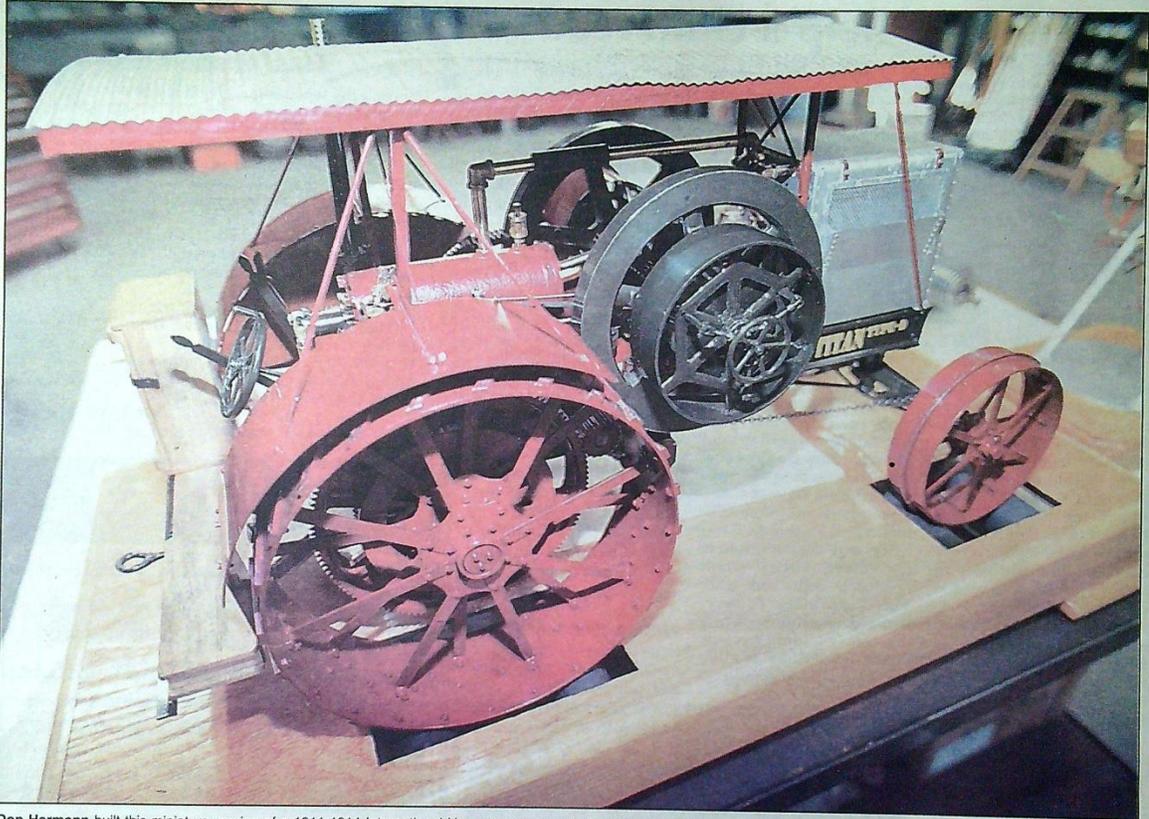
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See MACHINES, page 10

Retired farmer Don Hermann looks over a 9-cylinder, air-cooled miniature airplane engine he built several years ago. He has constructed several miniature engines. Photo by Barry Kough of the Lewiston Morning Tribune.



Don Hermann built this miniature version of a 1911-1914 International Harvester tractor, which runs on camp stove gas or three, 9-volt batteries. The tractor didn't have a seat and instead the farmer stood on a wooden platform. It had two gears – forward and reverse – and one speed, which wasn't fast. The miniature is one-eighth the size of the original and has a rear-wheel diameter of 8.75 inches. Photo by Barry Kough of the Tribune.

## Machines, from page 1

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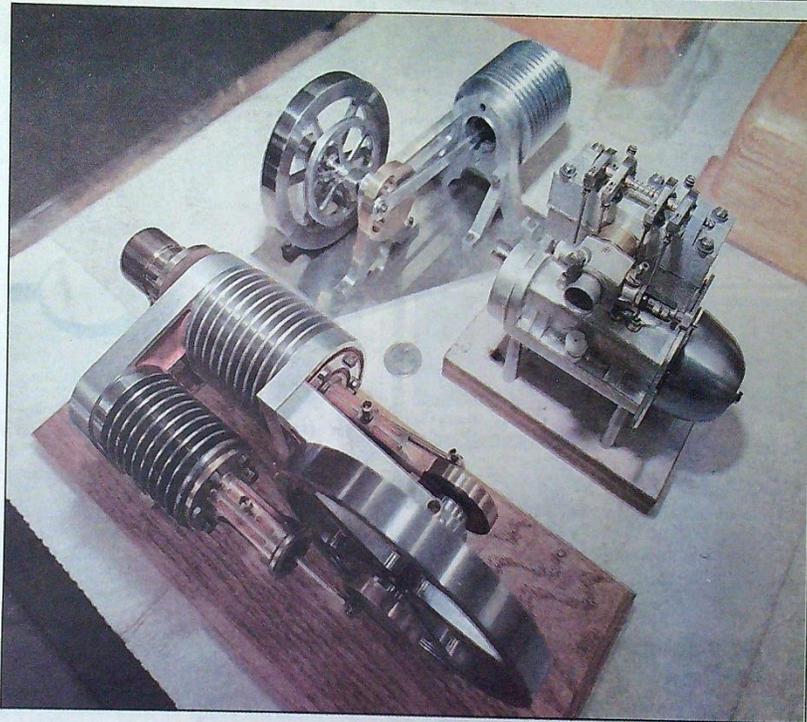
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## Many seniors go undiagnosed for depression

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. — Old-age symptoms can mask signs of depression, making it difficult to diagnose and treat about 2 million older adults nationwide who suffer from depression, doctors say.

Seniors do not present classic signs of depression during visits to their family practitioners, but instead complain of various aches and pains, which Dr. Bradley Diner says are likely related to depression.

"One of the biggest red flags is when they have symptoms with no obvious cause, when in fact, what they have is depression," said Diner, a psychiatrist who specializes in treating the elderly.

Because doctors and

patients have been conditioned to expect certain ailments in seniors — weight loss, fatigue, poor concentration, forgetfulness — some doctors overlook the possibility of depression and some patients forego seeking help. Both sides simply regard the ailments as an inevitable side-effect of aging.

"People would think, 'If you're old and sick, you'd be depressed, too.' We don't buy that anymore," said Dr. Mark D. Miller, an associate professor of psychiatry at the University of Pittsburgh. "A lot of people are under the impression that depression is a weakness, it's not — it's not a character flaw to admit you have it."

Miller, who authored the

book "Living Longer Depression Free," said most people perceive depression as something they can "get over," but it is a debilitating illness.

"Once it gets a hold of you, it can be just as fatal as pneumonia," he said. "You can look physically normal, but it's not something you can snap yourself out of."

The National Institute of Mental Health, a federal group established in 1946 to fund mental-illness research, found depression is a significant predictor of suicide in older adults who, the group said, are disproportionately more likely to take their own lives than other age groups.

Miller said 98 percent of all suicides at any age are

due to depression, but it can be prevented.

"If you treat it adequately and treat it early, it's preventable," he said. "When depression is removed, attitude and the ability to cope changes."

Dr. Helen Lavertsky, a researcher in geriatric depression at the University of California at Los Angeles, said the elderly are not comfortable admitting they might be depressed.

"Elderly citizens see it as a stigma, something embarrassing," Lavertsky said. "Some older primary care physicians may also not feel comfortable asking their patients if they feel depressed — they (the doctors) just weren't trained that way."

Dr. G. Richard Smith, chief of psychiatry at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, helped develop a new questionnaire, called the Depression-Arkansas Scale, which can help primary care physicians better diagnose and treat patients. Some of the 11 questions on the form seek to determine whether the patient feels sad, lethargic, guilty, distracted or suicidal.

Smith said that for every 10 people suffering from depression, five receive treatment; of those five, only one receives appropriate care.

"There will never be enough psychiatrists in the U.S. to treat it," he said.

— Associated Press